



# NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL AND TECHNICAL STATE UNIVERSITY

## GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

### UNIT POLICY

#### A. DEFINITIONS

Graduate Teaching Assistants, Graduate Research Assistants, and Graduate Administrative Assistants are full-time graduate students employed on a part-time basis (maximum 20 hours per week, .50 FTE during the academic year) by North Carolina A&T State University (A&T). Graduate assistantships are available to graduate students who have been admitted to a graduate degree program at A&T, maintain full-time status, are in good academic standing and are making satisfactory progress toward their degrees. A graduate assistantship is a form of apprenticeship and contributes to the student's professional development. Its primary purpose is to assist students in strengthening and successfully completing their academic program. It should include activities that are relevant to each student's program of study and contribute to the university's teaching, research/creative activity, or service efforts. Therefore, an assistantship necessitates periodic assessment and feedback regarding a student's performance. The three types of graduate assistantships are described below.

A.1. Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) support the instructional mission of the university. A GTA will possess the minimum qualifications established by Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS-COC): Graduate teaching assistants: master's in the teaching discipline or 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline, direct supervision by a faculty member experienced in the teaching discipline, regular in-service training, and planned and periodic evaluations." (SACS Guidelines of Faculty Credentials, 2006). With the proper credentialing by the SACS Liaison, a GTA may prepare course content, provide instruction and prepare assignments for students in lower division undergraduate courses. A&T faculty members oversee all GTA duties.

General duties include:

- Instruction in a classroom setting;
- Instruction in recitation sections;
- Conducting help sessions and holding office hours to advise students with class assignments;

- Assisting with laboratory setup;
- Proctoring examinations;
- Grading papers, exams, laboratory reports, and homework; and
- Other duties pertaining to the instructional mission of A&T.

A.2. Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs) support the research mission of the university. They conduct research in an area relevant to their major course of study under the direction of a faculty member. The research normally supports the faculty advisor's research and is supported by external funding. The research work generally leads to the student's thesis or dissertation. Research assistants supported through a research grant/contract assist faculty members in the completion of contracted research. They may be required to also contribute in the preparation of reports for continuing projects and proposals for new grants.

General duties include:

- Setting up research laboratories and experiments;
- Performing experiments, calculations, and analyzing the results; and disseminating new knowledge orally or in written publications;
- Reflecting on the state of the field and proposing new research problems;
- Attending conferences to present results and collaborate with other researchers;
- Training and supervising less experienced research personnel;
- Publishing research results in conferences, journal papers and research reports; and
- Assisting in the preparation of new proposals.

A.3. Graduate Administrative Assistants (GAAs) perform administrative responsibilities to support the operations of various university functions. Their duties may be unrelated directly to teaching or research. GAAs may be employed in academic and non-academic settings to provide staff, office and general duties.

A reference to "Graduate Assistant" or to "GAs" includes members of all three types of assistantships or any one type, unless stated to the contrary.

## **B. ELIGIBILITY**

### B.1. Graduate Teaching Assistants

A student is eligible to hold a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) position if a student is enrolled full time in that semester, is in good academic standing, and has a cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.0 or higher on all graduate courses. A Graduate Teaching appointment may also be determined by additional criteria including communication skills and adequate preparation in the subject area. Graduate Teaching assistants are evaluated every semester to maintain their assistantship.

### B.2. Graduate Research Assistants

Eligibility for Graduate Research Assistantship (GRA) is established by the director/principal investigator and/or the academic department. The recipients of research assistantships will be selected by the faculty member who directs the laboratory or research project.

Preference will be given to students who demonstrate qualifications for the position as demonstrated by (a) completion of courses related to the topic of the research, (b) prior research experience, or (c) research interests consistent with the project. Preference may also be given to doctoral students.

### B.3. Graduate Assistants near completion

Graduate students who have completed their course work requirements and are working on their thesis or dissertation with less than a full-time course load may be eligible for teaching and research assistantship in their final semester. Generally a master's student is expected to graduate within 2 years and a doctoral student is expected to graduate within 4 years of the beginning of his/her graduate course work for that degree.

### B.4. Non-resident Alien Students

In accordance with federal immigration laws, international students may not exceed 50 % FTE appointments and must not work more than 20 hours per week.

### B-5. Eligibility exclusions

Students in the following categories may not receive a graduate assistantship appointment:

- Non-degree seeking or transient students;
- Non-resident alien students whose immigration status does not allow employment in United States; and
- Undergraduate students.

## **C. APPOINTMENT AND TERMINATION**

### C.1. Appointment period

All assistantships are generally made for an academic year (9 months). A separate appointment for summer term can be made depending on the source and availability of funding and approval of the supervisor.

### C.2. Notification of appointment

Notification of awards should be in the form of a contract (the template will be created by the Graduate School) from the academic unit, and should state that the appointment is contingent upon approval by the appropriate budget official, dean and provost, and/or continuation of funding. The notification letter should contain information about the appointment period, compensation, expected duties, teaching and research load, review and renewal procedures, and tuition waivers if any.

### C.3. Renewal and Reappointments

Students must reapply for each additional year of graduate assistantship support. Continuation of graduate assistantship support from year-to-year or semester-to-semester is not guaranteed. Renewal of support is based on a number of factors including: (a) satisfactory progress toward degree completion, (b) satisfactory completion of prior assistantship responsibilities, and (c) availability of resources.

#### C.4. Termination

A Graduate Assistantship may be terminated before the expiration of its designated term due to loss of funding, for cause, for academic delinquency, by written notice, and by voluntary mutual agreement.

- *Loss of Funding.* A graduate assistantship may be terminated due to a loss, reduction, or reallocation in appropriation, grant, contract, gift, or other funds with which to support the appointment.
- *Cause.* The following are examples of sufficient cause for removal: incompetence, inefficiency, wanton carelessness or neglect of duty, violation of research ethics, violation of safety protocols, insubordination, and repeated or extended absence.
- *Academic Delinquency.* Not making satisfactory academic progress toward a degree or is otherwise not in good academic standing.
- *Voluntary Agreement.* With the agreement of the University, an appointment may be terminated by the voluntary written resignation of the graduate assistant.

#### C.5. Payment options

Payment will be made in accordance to the procedures dictated by the salary administration, human resources and financial aid offices.

### **D. COMPENSATION**

In accordance with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) requirements, the University's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO/AA) Statement (<http://www.ncat.edu/hr/policies/index.html>) and EEO/AA certification in the Federal Government's System for Award Management (SAM.gov), compensation for Graduate Assistants must be treated the same under like circumstances. This principle requires the University and its academic units to hire graduate students doing similar kinds of work through the same mechanism at similar rates, including pay scales and tuition charges. Equal compensation is mandated by the following: the Equal Pay Act of 1963, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, and Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Therefore, the University must pay equal compensation to Graduate Assistants who perform jobs that require substantially equal skills, effort and responsibilities, and that are performed under similar working conditions within the University.

#### D.1. Pay scale

Graduate Assistantships are based on degree level (Master's or Doctoral), progression in the graduate program, and academic discipline. Pay rates may vary by student experience, funding source, discipline, and responsibilities of the appointment. The University will set the minimum and maximum salary scale for all categories of assistantships. The salaries will be competitive and ensure fairness.

Departments should monitor their pay practices for consistency to ensure that individuals are paid in accordance with the published pay scales and in accordance with the legal requirements cited above. For example, all GRAs with similar skills, effort and responsibilities in a PhD program in the same discipline shall be paid the same.

#### D.2. Tuition Remission

A Graduate Assistant may be eligible for tuition remission or reduction, as well as payment of required fees. The funds associated with GTA tuition remission are allocated to the academic schools and colleges. Allocation to individual students is managed by the schools/colleges.

### **E. EVALUATION**

Each department is responsible for determining procedures for review and evaluation of graduate assistants and for informing GAs of these procedures. The process of evaluation may vary by departments, and may include written assessment of work by an individual faculty member, classroom visitation by designated faculty members, and written student evaluations. The results of reviews and evaluations should be discussed with the GA concerned.

### **F. TRAINING**

- All graduate assistants are required to undergo training as specified by the Graduate School
- All new teaching assistants are required to attend instructional workshops during the week before classes began in the fall or spring semester.
- Before assuming teaching assistant duties that require contact with students, a non-native, non-primary-English-speaking graduate student must be certified as proficient in oral and written English.
- Graduate Research Assistants are required to receive lab safety training (laser safety, chemical hazard safety, etc.) before working in any lab. Graduate Research Assistants will be required to undergo training in research ethics, conflict of interest, responsible authorship, intellectual property rights, publications and patent policy, and other topics mandated by federal and state regulations.

### **G. ADMINISTRATION**

A graduate assistantship represents financial support to qualified graduate students to allow them to provide services to the university while continuing to focus their effort on completing their degree programs. All assistantships must be recommended by a senior university administrator (member of the Chancellor's Cabinet or a Dean). All assistantships must be funded from approved university accounts with adequate funding in the assistantship line item. Personal funds cannot be used to support assistantships.

The Graduate College will administer all assistantships and will be responsible for post audit reports to track and monitor compliance with these policies, adherence to fiscal regulations, etc.

## **H. CODE OF CONDUCT**

A Graduate Assistant's teaching, research, and administrative activities are subject to the ethical precepts and codes of the academic profession, the laws of the State of North Carolina regarding its employees, the laws of the United States, and University policies governing institutional obligations. Violation of any of these requirements constitutes a basis for disciplinary action in accordance with procedures set forth in the University's policies. In their interactions with students, faculty, and all other members of the university community, GAs are expected to conduct themselves with professionalism, ethics, sensitivity and thoughtfulness.

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